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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-NINTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 3 May 1993, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. DE ARAUJO CASTRO (Brazil)

- Expression of sympathy on the death of Mr. Ranasinghe Premadasa, President of Sri Lanka
- Reports by Chairmen of Working Groups
- Organization of work

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY ON THE DEATH OF MR. RANASINGHE PREMADASA, PRESIDENT OF SRI LANKA

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of all the members of the Disarmament Commission, I express our heartfelt sorrow on the tragic death under such terrible circumstances of President Ranasinghe Premadasa of Sri Lanka.

I would request the delegation of Sri Lanka kindly to convey the condolences of the members of the Commission to the Government and to the people of Sri Lanka, as well as to the bereaved family of the deceased President.

Mr. PALIHAKKARA (Sri Lanka): My delegation was deeply touched by the sentiments of condolence and solidarity you expressed, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Commission.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Sri Lanka, I wish to thank you, Sir, and the other members of the Commission for these sentiments. We shall, of course, transmit these expressions of condolence to the Government and to the family of the deceased President.

REPORTS BY CHAIRMEN OF WORKING GROUPS

The CHAIRMAN: As members will recall, the purpose of today's meeting is to receive the progress reports from the Chairmen of the Working Groups and also to consider the working timetable for the remainder of our session.

The Disarmament Commission received the first round of progress reports of its Working Groups last Monday, 26 April. Since then, all three Working Groups have continued their deliberations on their respective agenda items. During the course of those deliberations, views were expressed on a number of proposals and progress has been made.

(The Chairman)

We are today to hear the second round of progress reports by the Chairmen of the Working Groups. As we are all very much aware, we embark today on the crucial final week of work during this substantive session, in which we are to conclude our deliberations on the various items.

I should like to take this opportunity to appeal to all delegations to cooperate as fully as possible in the process of reaching final agreement on the two items that we are supposed to conclude this year, as well as in the consideration, to be concluded next year, of the item on nuclear disarmament.

(The Chairman)

In my assessment, and bearing in mind the information I have on the progress of work in the Working Groups as well as on what has been achieved in the last two years, it is very realistic to say that there are grounds for reaching meaningful results this year, both on regional disarmament and on science and technology. It is obvious that, to reach those results, a cooperative and constructive attitude on the part of all delegations will be necessary in the next few days in the deliberations of the Working Groups. I believe that the time for simply reiterating national positions of principle has passed. For that purpose we had the two previous years and the earlier part of the current session. Delegations should perhaps bear in mind that if they feel it absolutely necessary they may make statements for the record at the concluding plenary meeting we will have on Monday, 10 May.

As in any negotiating process, international or otherwise, no single participant can hope to achieve total satisfaction. We must all now feel committed to the conclusion of the collective task to which we have already dedicated two years of work: a common endeavour in which we should all be prepared to demonstrate our readiness to cooperate in a flexible and positive manner. In this task, we count on a very strong asset: the dedication and competance of the Chairmen of the Working Groups and the Drafting Group. And we count on the cooperation of each and every delegation.

Having said that, I shall now call upon the Chairmen of the three Working Groups to present their progress reports on the work accomplished in the past week and on the prospects they see for the conclusion of the work during the coming week.

I call first on the Chairman of Working Group I, Ambassador Victor Batiouk of Ukraine.

Mr. BATIOUK (Ukraine), Chairman of Working Group I: So far during this session, Working Group I has held a total of four official meetings. Two of them took place last week: an official meeting of the Working Group and a session of consultations. In addition, last week the Chairman held two rounds of unofficial consultations with interested delegations. As a result of that effort, we have worked out the general outlines of the concluding document that might be called "Guidelines and recommendations for the process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons".

The Secretariat prepared a compendium of all the suggestions made with respect to nuclear disarmament; it is based on working papers submitted last year and this year.

In view of the necessity of concluding work on two other items that are being discussed for the last time this year, it seems that our programme for the remaining week cannot be as ambitious as we would like it to be. Only two meetings are provided for: two hours following the adjournment of this plenary meeting, and a brief meeting on Thursday, just to adopt our report. That is why in the week ahead it seems that we cannot improve on the task we have performed; we can only conclude what we have done and prepare an outline for our work in preparation for next year's concluding session of Working Group I.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the Chairman of Working Group II, Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann of Germany.

Mr. HOFFMANN (Germany), Chairman of Working Group II: Last week, Working Group II did what it was supposed to do: it worked. It worked according to the schedule given us by the Chairman, and a little beyond. On Thursday night we were able tentatively to conclude Chapters I and II; they were distributed on Friday in all languages. On Thursday we also distributed a new Chairman's paper for Chapters III, IV and V, and we started discussing them in two meetings on Friday. As a result, I will be issuing today a new formulation for Chapters III-V, in the form of an informal working paper.

I would like, Sir, to echo your appeal. We have to concentrate on the main issues. The real problem is the time problem. But I am sure we can achieve our goal, because representatives are willing to the cause.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the Chairman of Working Group III, Ambassador Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun of Mongolia.

Mr. ERDENECHULUUN (Mongolia), Chairman of Working Group III: It is my pleasure once again to present the progress report for Working Group III. Working Group III, on the role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields, held two formal meetings last week and had a structured and constructive exchange of views on the Chairman's working paper, as well as on several non-papers presented to the group by delegations. A number of delegations took part in the discussion, and every effort was made to seek consensus on the subject.

I would like also to inform the Disarmament Commission that Working Group III has established an open-ended drafting group entrusted with the responsibility of drafting a report on the agenda item and of submitting it to

(Mr. Erdenechuluun, Chairman, Working Group III)

the Working Group for consideration and approval. All interested delegations are expected to participate in and contribute to the work of drafting the guidelines. The drafting group held several meetings and made serious attempts to draft a report on the subject. I wish to emphasize that this drafting group, ably chaired by Ambassador Peggy Mason of Canada, is an open-ended group. I hope the drafting group will make sufficient progress in its work and will be able to submit its draft report to the Working Group towards the end of this week for consideration.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I wish to echo your appeal to all delegations to display flexibility in order to reach consensus on the draft guidelines under consideration.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: The working timetable for the period of 3 to 10 May has been distributed to all delegations in Informal Paper No. 3. It is a result of the work done at the meeting of the Expanded Bureau, held on Friday, 30 April, in which, with the participation of the Chairmen of the Working Groups, we tried to come up with a timetable that would meet all concerns. We in the Bureau are very much aware of the different opinions on the question of overlapping or not overlapping meetings; I think it was the considered opinion of all the members of the Bureau that we would have to come up with a timetable along the lines of the one before the Commission, and I would request members to approve it.

(The Chairman)

Also reflecting the preoccupation of other delegations, in particular the smaller delegations that have been finding it a bit difficult to follow the simultaneous work going on at times, some of the members of the Bureau suggested that in the middle of the week, on Wednesday morning, we have a meeting of the Committee of the Whole, in which we will be receiving the briefings of the Chairmen of the Working Groups on the progress of the work of the Working Groups, and we have incorporated this suggestion into the timetable.

The reason we are doing this in the Committee of the Whole and not in a formal plenary meeting is to make it a little bit more informal. At this meeting it is expected that the Chairmen of the Working Groups will give a more detailed and focused presentation not only of what has been achieved but, in particular, of the difficulties that they may still see lying ahead in the final two or three days of negotiations in the different Working Groups.

At this meeting we would also have available the working papers, the Chairmen's papers, the conference room papers, or whatever they are presenting as the basis for the discussion in the three Groups, so that all delegations would have access to these papers if they had not been able to be present in the meetings of the Working Groups. Basically, it is not only for information purposes but also to have a mid-week stocktaking as we approach the end of our session. This meeting would be held on Wednesday at 10 a.m. in this same room.

We noticed also that in the timetable it is clearly stated - and I should point out that this is in a footnote on the second page - that all Working Groups must finalize their respective reports by Friday, 7 May, at 6 p.m. In other words, they hve to be in their absolutely final form at the close of day on Friday, so that they may be translated and processed by the Secretariat in order to be considered and adopted on Monday morning.

(The Chairman)

On Monday, 10 May, our schedule provides for a 10 a.m. meeting of the Committee of the Whole, which is to receive the reports of the Working Groups. Once we have considered these reports and, after discussion, adopted them, we shall go into plenary meeting to adopt formally not only these reports but also the report of the Commission as a whole.

As I mentioned, we also have provision on Monday for a plenary meeting, which could provide for just one concluding statement for the session, depending on what delegations wish, or at which all delegations would be free, if they felt it necessary, to make individual concluding statements. I think that the list of speakers who wish to make concluding statements for the record, has already been opened by the Secretariat. I think that this can be helpful in bringing about agreement in the various Working Groups, in the sense that certain delegations may see a need to place on record certain national positions on which they felt they had not been completely satisfied in the process of negotiation. As I mentioned before, in any negotiation all delegations rarely get complete satisfaction. Certain delegations may find a need to make certain compromises and then on Monday to make a statement for the record. So this procedure would serve another purpose, for it might prove to be helpful in facilitating our conclusion.

As we know, there is an inevitable overlapping of meetings. There is much work still to be done, in particular in Working Groups II and III, and also in the Drafting Group of Working Group III, chaired by Ambassador Peggy Mason.

We also have to conclude for this session the work on nuclear disarmament, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Victor Batiouk of Ukraine. Although we are not supposed to reach at this session final agreement on the

(The Chairman)

substantive text on nuclear disarmament, I very much hope that we could at least set the basis for the ongoing work that is to be carried out by the Chairman of the Working Group, not only at the next session of the Disarmament Commission in 1994 but also, as has been previously agreed to, even during the intersessional period. I think the fact that a year in advance we will have already entrusted Ambassador Batiouk with the responsibility of carrying on the work on nuclear disarmament will be very helpful, since there will be much more time to prepare whatever documents might be needed and to carry out whatever consultations might be necessary in order to conclude this work.

During this week we will necessarily have to concentrate most of the available time on the work of Working Groups II and III. As I said, I am very hopeful. My assessment is, in fact, positive, and I am not just saying this because the Chairman is supposed to be a little bit more optimistic than are individual delegations: but from what I have been following in the work of the various Working Groups, I do feel that we have a very solid basis on which, by Friday, the Working Groups can conclude their work with meaningful results.

If there are no comments, I shall assume accordingly that the Commission wishes to adopt the timetable for this week and for the final day, 10 May, and adjourn the meeting.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.